For whatever reason, when this topic of discussion comes up, those that say we shouldn't do anything to end poverty become vilified as if they don't care about other people. While all in favor of "doing something" are lauded as saints. It makes sense on the surface; people wishing to retain what they've earned seem selfish and the people looking to help seem selfless.

Interestingly enough, when you actually think about, the roles are reversed. Take for example the poorest continent on the planet, Africa. When people strap on their crusading shoes and decide the U.S. should donate goods to other countries in the hopes it will eradicate poverty, they usually appeal to their emotions instead of their rationality. Of course it's easy to do, but think about what you're actually doing when you just give a bunch of food to other countries.

Pretend that the U.S. is donating 1,000,000 lbs of food to a country in Africa. Once that food is thrust into the local market for food at no charge from the U.S., two things will happen:

1) it will obviously be consumed, and

2) the price of food already established by local merchants will be driven towards the floor.

Why would the people of this country pay for food when they can get it for free? That's easy, of course they wouldn't. But how have you helped the sellers of food trying to make a living? Just to compete with our generous donation, they have to lower prices to the point where even if they have a higher quality good, they're more than likely losing money. The same thing applies to other industries as well and isn't limited to just Afirca. To generalize, if countries really want to reduce poverty, they need to stop relying on subsidies and start utilizing the resources around them, whatever they might be, because much more often than not, there's a market for them.

This is the reason the people wanting to help others in impovershed countries are doing more harm than good. Of course when the problem continues, they scratch their heads and wonder why their donation(s) didn't cure the ill. And as if to satisfy their own egos, these people will hide behind the phrase, "at least I wanted to help". All the while, people like me who do nothing are helping more than those who actually want to.

For a domestic parallel, read "The Vision of the Anointed" by Thomas Sowell. In it, he talks about the self-congratulatory motivations of crusaders to "fix" things like poverty and the subsequent failure of their "solutions".